



FROM TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS
TO AGGRESSOR TO ARMED CONFLICT:

THREATS ARISING FROM THE APPEASEMENT POLICY TOWARDS RUSSIA

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AF RF	Armed Forces of the Russian Federation
AFU	Armed Forces of Ukraine
DIU	Defence Intelligence of Ukraine
DPR	so-called Donetsk People's Republic
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
ECHR	the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (the European Convention on Human Rights)
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
EU	European Union
EW	Electronic warfare
FSB	Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation
GDP	Gross domestic product
GRETA	Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
GRU	the Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IAG	Illegal armed groups
ICC	International Criminal Court
IHL	International humanitarian law
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LGB	Local governing body
LPR	so-called Luhansk People's Republic
MASSR	Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
MCIP	Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MPU	Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PACE	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
PMR	Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic
RF	Russian Federation
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
SOGI	Sexual orientation and gender identities
TDF	Territorial Defence Forces
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WTO	World Trade Organization

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, it has been shown that trying to appease an aggressor is often futile. Although it may seem like it brings about temporary peace, it usually leads to armed conflicts and countless casualties in the long run. Unfortunately, even in the 21st century, the international community has continued to make the same mistakes as before. It resulted in the deadliest armed conflict since World War II – the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine.

Back in 2004, a political scientist and statesman named Zbigniew Brzeziński referred to Putin as "Moscow's Mussolini" due to his aspirations of creating a single Slavic state governed by the Kremlin¹. Despite Russia's imperialist threat, the international community did not strongly react to their aggression towards Moldova, Chechnya, and Georgia. Instead, they made concessions and attempted to appease the aggressor, even after Putin's "Munich speech" in 2007, which left no doubt about his desire to restore the USSR. Furthermore, Russia became one of the pillars of European and international security. In 2008, during the EU-Russian Summit, a decision was made to build new European security bases with the Russian Federation, and in 2010, Germany, France, and Russia discussed the creation of a single security space.

The attempt to build peace by involving the aggressor resulted in Russia's annexation of Crimea and occupation of eastern Ukraine in 2014. Even though the international community expressed concerns about Russia's aggression, they didn't take appropriate action. Instead, Russia escalated conflicts in Syria and caused instability in countries like Venezuela, Libya, Sudan, and the CAR. They also carried out political assassinations in Europe and engaged in disinformation, cyber-attacks, and interference in the affairs of other countries.

The events of 2014 showed that the Euro-Atlantic community was unable to respond effectively to Russia's aggressive behavior. Ukraine's security guarantees under the Budapest Memorandum turned out to be a fiction - a mechanism that couldn't be implemented and didn't work in the face of aggression by one of the guarantors. In addition, Russia has manipulated the concept of "collective security" as defined in the UN Charter, and their veto power has allowed them to act with impunity as one of the five "guardians" of international security.

Although the international community didn't recognize the change of borders resulting from Russia's annexation of part of Ukraine, they prioritized normalizing relations with Russia in exchange for freezing the conflict. In 2018, France initiated a new regional security and defense architecture with Russia, and in 2019, Russia returned to full participation in PACE, while the US proposed renewing Russia's membership in the G7.

Despite sanctions imposed on Russia, some EU member states continued exporting weapons to Russia, citing contracts made before August 1, 2014². Russia used these weapons to commit international crimes against Ukrainians, and took the international community's lack of action as a "green light" for a full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022.

Despite the severe consequences of Russian aggression, some prominent political figures insist on negotiating with Putin and preserving his regime's reputation. They suggest making concessions to Russia, even if it means using a sovereign state's territory as a bargaining chip. This position is justified by their belief that Putin's imperial ambitions are legitimate security concerns due to a "feeling of threat" from neighboring countries.

The armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine has surpassed their borders and gained a regional significance. Its negative consequences have impacted various aspects of the international community's existence, from world trade to nuclear deterrence, collective security, and even defining a civilizational paradigm for further development.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Russian Federation has pursued its geopolitical interests by interfering in the affairs of other countries and using aggression, including starting ethnic conflicts and annexation of territories. These actions violate international law and result in human rights violations and international crimes. Aggression against Moldova, Chechnya, and Georgia ended in "peace agreements" that left puppet pro-Russian regimes and annexations. The aggressor has not been held accountable and even acted as a "mediator" and "peacemaker," preventing the victim states from developing independently.

The international community's response to the annexation of Crimea was initially hesitant, lacking specific mechanisms for de-occupation and reintegration into Ukraine, and holding those responsible accountable. This resulted in significant changes to the region in terms of demography, politics, society, culture, and ecology. Russia militarized the territory and its population, using it as a hub for further aggression.

This impunity contributed to the beginning of another cycle of aggression against Ukraine which began on February 24, 2022. Russia occupied and announced the annexation of the territories of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia regions, implementing the same strategy as in Crimea with increasing military presence, forced conscription, the militarization of education and other spheres of life, deportations and forced displacement, passportization of the population, destruction or appropriation of cultural heritage, and discriminatory persecution. These actions have elements of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide against the Ukrainian people, particularly regarding the forcible transfer of children to Russian families.

The Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine is a clear violation of international law and puts global security at risk. This requires a response from the international community. The armed conflict in Ukraine harms global development, particularly in areas such as security, the rule of law, the economy, trade, migration, and the establishment of democracy and human rights. The Russian Federation's aggression undermines international law and has negative consequences for distant regions, threatening food, humanitarian, migration, economic, and energy crises, as well as international crime.

Attempts to appease the aggressor through territorial concessions have proven ineffective in guaranteeing stable peace and international security. The successful efforts to counter Russian aggression against Ukraine and violations of international law can serve as a basis for resolving conflicts in other parts of the world. These countermeasures should be based on holding the aggressor accountable, ensuring a victim-centered approach, and implementing non-repetition guarantees to prevent future aggression.

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to analyze the consequences of implementing the policy of appeasement of the aggressor, including territorial concessions, using the example of the occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation.

The practical relevance of the research covers the possibility of using its results during the development of foreign policy vectors of individual states and the joint position of the international community regarding the effective counteraction of the crime of aggression and the violation of the norms of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The recommendations resulting from the research are the basis of the future peacebuilding processes not only in the relations between the parties to the armed conflict but also in other unstable regions.

Research problems:

- 1** forms and instruments of Russian aggression against sovereign states;
- 2** reaction of the international community to violations of the fundamental principles of international law: vectors of the policy of appeasement;
- 3** consequences of the implementation of the policy of territorial concessions, the repetition of the “Crimean scenario” in other occupied territories;
- 4** challenges and threats associated with the aggression of the Russian Federation, existing and potential countermeasures.

The subject of this study is the manifestation of the reaction of the international community to the aggression of the Russian Federation, mainly, but not exclusively, against Ukraine, and the assessment of the consequences of the corresponding reaction with specific recommendations for strengthening its effectiveness.

The research methodology as a whole is based on a systematic approach to the study of the situation: screening of open sources of information, analysis of international treaties and legal acts of the occupying state, collection of data on the facts of violations of human rights and freedoms and their victims, synthesis of existing positions of specialized international organizations and expert circles. In connection with the lack of access to the occupied territory, as well as due to the closure of several Russian sources of information, the main methods used during the research are:

- a** gnoseology-based approach - legal analysis of normative acts;
- b** methods of comparative law research - comparison of the international community's reactions to aggression by the Russian Federation against various sovereign states.
- c** content analysis - search and collection of information from legal acts, mass media, social networks, websites of the occupation administration, etc.

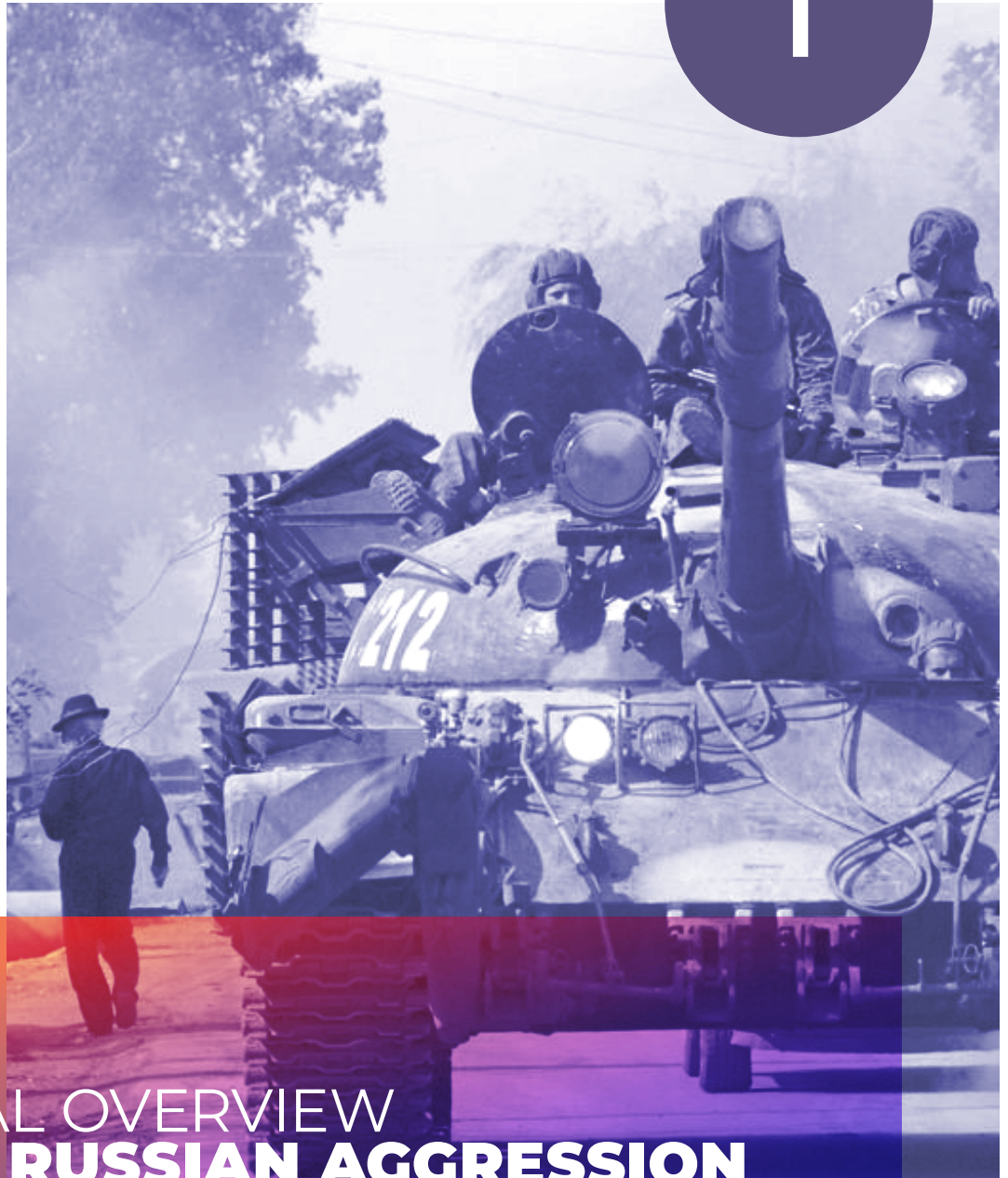
The dynamism and flexibility of the methodology used during the preparation of this study indicate a significant potential for adapting the outlined approach outlined based on its results to respond to violations of the fundamental principles of modern international law, in particular, the prohibition of aggression and respect for the territorial integrity of sovereign states.



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SECTION

1



GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE RUSSIAN AGGRESSION

towards other subjects of international law since the collapse of the USSR (Chechnya, Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia)

After the Soviet Union collapsed, the Russian Federation (RF) began implementing an aggressive and imperialistic policy towards its neighbors and other international actors. The RF attempted to expand its borders and prevent former USSR member states from existing independently.

The Russian Federation's actions violated international law by interfering in other states' internal affairs, limiting people's self-determination, committing aggressive acts and initiating armed conflicts, and committing war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The international community failed to respond adequately, which allowed the Russian Federation to act with impunity and continue its conquests. Sometimes, the Russian Federation secured its territorial gains through "peace agreements" brokered by international organizations and individual states, which prevented further independent development of states and peoples.

The Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine in 2022 was not an isolated event but part of a larger pattern of violating international law and imperialistic policies. The RF interfered in the internal affairs of Moldova, Chechnya, and Georgia and initiated armed conflicts against them, using each conflict as a "stepping stone" towards seizing Crimea in 2014 and attacking Ukraine on a large scale in 2022.

A. CHECHNYA

The process of the Soviet Union collapsing and the restoration of independence for individual states was complicated legally and politically. Former member states were now independent subjects of international law and no longer had to consult with Moscow for decisions.

Chechen state, whose people fought for the right to self-determination, could have become one of these subjects. The conflict in Chechnya and the fight for their own state was a result of earlier crimes committed by the Soviet regime, particularly the deportation of the Chechen and Ingush peoples in 1944³.

During the existence of the USSR, the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic was part of the Russian RSFSR, which was a union republic within the USSR⁴. Only union republics had the right to secede from the USSR, but autonomous republics, including Chechen-Ingush, had the authority of state power on the basis of the free self-determination of peoples⁵.

In 1990, the "parade of sovereignties" occurred, during which the union republics of the USSR declared their own sovereignty, including the Russian Federation itself (known as the RSFSR, with a name change to "Russian Federation" in 1991)⁶. This process also affected former autonomous republics within the RSFSR, who proclaimed their own sovereignty⁷ but declared membership in the RSFSR with a subsequent agreement on settling relations⁸.



However, the Chechen-Ingush Republic declared itself an independent state⁹. The RSFSR ignored this declaration and recognized all former autonomous republics as separate republics within the RSFSR, which was stated in its 1991 Constitution¹⁰. This was the first time the will of the Chechen and Ingush peoples was ignored. In 1991, the Republic of Ingushetia separated from the Chechen Republic and remained part of the Russian SFSR¹¹.

In 1991, the "All-National Congress of the Chechen People" announced the creation of an independent state, the Chechen Republic, and scheduled presidential and parliamentary elections on its territory¹². However, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) reacted to this with an ultimatum and formed a controlled provisional government in the republic to "stabilize the situation and restore the constitutional order"¹³. Despite this, elections were still held on the territory of Chechnya, but the RSFSR did not recognize their legitimacy¹⁴.

Later, the Russian Federation (RF) formally defined the Chechen Republic as a subject of the Russian Federation in accordance with the new Constitution of the Russian Federation of 1993¹⁵. However, Chechnya was the only republic that did not participate in the popular vote on the approval of the Constitution¹⁶ and refused to conclude a constitutional federal agreement between the RF and its republics on the relations between them¹⁷. The RF refused to recognize only the independence of Chechnya, and this became a precondition for the future armed conflict, in course of which the Chechen people defended their right to self-determination, and the RF tried to retain control over the republic, which in 1994 began to name itself the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria¹⁸.

In the fall of 1994, the RF launched a military operation against Chechnya "in order to restore constitutional law and order"¹⁹. The Russian military directly participated in the war, but the RF denied this fact, claiming that the hostilities took place between the forces of the provisional government controlled by it (which was legal, in its opinion) and between the structures of

Ichkeria (illegal, in the opinion of the RF)²⁰. As the capital of Chechnya could not be captured immediately and specific Russian military personnel and armored vehicles were identified, the Russian Federation did not subsequently deny its participation in the conflict. It now claims that it was conducting hostilities with illegal armed groups because it did not consider Chechnya a state and did not recognize the Chechen people's right to self-determination²¹.

The conflict lasted until the end of 1996 and ended with the formal defeat of the RF - the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ichkeria and the signing of peace agreements during 1995-1997, when the OSCE acted as an intermediary. The concluded agreements declared respect for the right of peoples to self-determination, the refusal to use force between the RF and Chechnya, and the need to develop relations on the basis of international law, in particular by concluding an agreement on relations with Chechnya by 2001²². Despite this, throughout the conflict settlement process, the RF declared its non-recognition of Ichkeria, and agreed only to grant the Chechen Republic a special status as a subject of the RF²³. The RF insisted that Chechnya had to sign a federal agreement with the RF, which Chechnya refused to sign at the beginning of the conflict²⁴.

The peace agreements themselves did not specify the exact legal status of Chechnya, postponing the settlement of this issue. This "status quo" provided the Russian Federation with an opportunity to regroup, act with impunity, and move to the second stage of the war.

In 1999, during the presidency of V. Putin, a "counter-terrorist operation" was announced in order to "liberate the Chechen people from the yoke of terrorism and lawlessness"²⁵. The European Parliament suggested that the renewal of the conflict could be caused, in particular, by the interests of the RF in the minerals located in the territory of the region²⁶.

The Russian Federation (RF) used military force to take control of Chechnya by the year 2000, and they continued to fight until they completely defeated Chechnya between 2005 and 2009. This military action prevented the Chechen people from being able to exercise their right to self-determination, and as a result, Chechnya remained part of the RF without any agreement being made.

During the conflict, the RF committed many crimes, including murder, torture, rape, and unjustly imprisoning people. They also destroyed the city of Grozny and used excessive force against civilians²⁷, which caused many people to be displaced from their homes.



Unfortunately, neither the United Nations General Assembly nor the United Nations Security Council took action to address the violations of international law in Chechnya by the RF. The UN Human Rights Commission did not launch an independent investigation commission, so these crimes were not properly documented²⁸. Although the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) was later authorized to investigate human rights violations in Chechnya²⁹, no relevant report was produced.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) believed that the conflict in Chechnya was an internal matter of the Russian Federation (RF) and recognized that Chechnya was part of the RF³⁰ (along with the United Nations and the European Union)³¹. PACE urged the international community not to support Chechnya's military activities³². Despite clear violations of international law, the EU signed partnership and cooperation agreements with the RF between 1994 and 1997³³. In 1996, Russia was admitted as a member of the Council of Europe³⁴, an organization that promotes the rule of law, without any sanctions or other measures being imposed³⁵.

Only after the situation in Chechnya worsened in 1999 did PACE warn the RF that they might be excluded from the Council of Europe and proposed creating an international tribunal to investigate the RF's crimes in Chechnya. However, the Russian delegation was only stripped of its voting rights in PACE³⁶, and the proposed exclusion and tribunal were never established.

In 2001, the RF's representative rights in PACE were reinstated³⁷, and no other states intervened to hold the RF accountable for their violations of international law. The International Court of Justice was not involved, and the European Court of Human Rights only addressed individual complaints from specific victims³⁸.



In 2007, Russian President V. Putin appointed R. Kadyrov as acting President of Chechnya to exert control over the region³⁹. Kadyrov remains in this position and has shown unwavering support for the RF's actions, including aggression against Ukraine. He has stated that he is willing to carry out any order from the Russian President⁴⁰. Chechens have been directly involved in hostilities against Ukraine as part of the Russian Armed Forces since 2014⁴¹. Kadyrov plays a significant role in Russian propaganda and has recently stated that the West will kneel before the RF, and European states will have to cooperate with Russia in all areas⁴².

B. MOLDOVA

The roots of the armed conflict between Moldova and the Russian Federation (RF) go back a long way, to when the territory of modern-day Moldova was controlled by different powers including Romania, the Russian Empire, and the Soviet Union.

In 1924, the Soviet Union created the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) within the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, on the left bank of the Dniester River (Transnistria). Even then, the Soviet party and military leaders saw the MASSR as a platform to pursue "military and political goals," such as regaining control over Bessarabia, which was part of Romania⁴³.

In June 1940, the Soviet Union issued a territorial ultimatum to Romania and sent troops into Bessarabia⁴⁴. By August, the Moldavian SSR was formed as an independent union republic, which included Bessarabia and part of the former MASSR⁴⁵. The Russian language became widespread on its territory due to colonization, and the Moldovan language was introduced, based on the Cyrillic alphabet instead of Romanian, which uses the Latin alphabet.

During the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990-1991, Moldova declared independence⁴⁶ and wanted to return to its Romanian identity and the Latin alphabet. Moldova also claimed that the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939 between Germany and the USSR was the basis for illegitimate territorial claims and the formation of the Moldavian SSR⁴⁷.

In 1989-1991, two referendums were held in Transnistria, a region that was part of the Moldavian SSR. As a result, the "Pridnestrovian Moldavian SSR" was declared as part of the USSR and later the "Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic" ("PMR") was declared as an independent entity on the left bank of the Dniester River.

These decisions were made based on the alleged "right to self-determination" of the people of Transnistria, who were mainly Ukrainians, Russians, and Moldovans. They claimed they needed protection from "chauvinism and national totalitarianism" and disagreed with Moldova's political course⁴⁸. The Soviet Union tried to prevent its republics from seceding and losing control over their political development. Thus, they called on Moldova to stop its efforts to create its own national state⁴⁹.



In September 1990, the “PMR” allowed the Soviet Union to deploy its Armed Forces on its territory for security purposes, and the 14th Guards Combined Arms Army was stationed there. This unit was later transferred to the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation in 1992⁵⁰. However, when Moldova declared its independence, it demanded the withdrawal of all foreign troops from its territory, including the 14th Guards Combined Arms Army.

Between March and July of 1992, an armed conflict broke out when Moldova attempted to regain control of Transnistria. However, the Russian 14th Army and the illegal armed groups of the “PMR”, which the 14th Army supported, opposed Moldova using military force⁵¹. Despite Moldova's attempts, it could not restore its territorial integrity by military means, and it was forced to seek a diplomatic solution to the conflict with the Russian army on its territory⁵².



<https://regnum.ru/pictures/2342518/41.html>

As a result of the hostilities, the former President of the Russian Federation Boris Yeltsin stated that Russia provided direct support to the “PMR” and had achieved its own goals in the region. Yeltsin suggested that Moldova grant Transnistria political statehood⁵³. Some of the individuals who fought alongside the “PMR” separatists in Moldova later played a role in conflicts in Chechnya, Georgia, and the seizure of Crimea. Some of them also held political offices in the Russian-controlled entity in eastern Ukraine, the “Donetsk People's Republic”, including I. Girkin, who was sentenced by a Dutch court to life imprisonment for his participation in the downing of Malaysian flight MH-17 in 2014⁵⁴.

In 1993, the OSCE became involved in efforts to resolve the conflict, and it has acted as an intermediary in diplomatic negotiations ever since⁵⁵. In 1994, Russia and Moldova signed agreements that established the special status of the “PMR” as part of Moldova as a condition for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Moldovan territory⁵⁶. At the same time, a "referendum" was held in “PMR”, which granted the 14th Army of the Russian Federation the right to remain on "its territory"⁵⁷.

In 2003, Russia proposed a "peace plan" that included the federalization of Moldova, the recognition of the “PMR” as a state entity within Moldova, the right of the “PMR” to leave Moldova in the event of its unification with Romania, and the placement of the Russian "peacekeeping contingent" in Moldova until at least 2020⁵⁸. However, Moldova did not sign this plan. In 2005, Ukraine proposed another plan, which focused on the democratization of the region and the withdrawal of Russian troops during 2005-2006⁵⁹. As part of the plan's implementation, Moldova granted autonomous status to the settlements of Transnistria within Moldova⁶⁰.

However, in 2006, a “referendum” was held in “PMR”, where the majority of the population allegedly voted for unification with the RF⁶¹. Based on this, the State Duma of the Russian Federation called on the international community to take such a wish into account and also noted the need to maintain a contingent of Russian troops in the “PMR” and ensure the access of “PMR” to Russian culture and education⁶². The RF carried out an illegal passportization of the region⁶³. Subsequently, in 2016-2017, “PMR” began the process of harmonization of its own legislation with the Russian one and legalized the use of the state flag of the RF in parallel with the flag of “PMR”⁶⁴.



In 1992, Moldova appealed to the UN with a demand to react to the violation of the principles of international law and its territorial integrity by the occupying Russian troops⁶⁵, but there was no reaction of the international community as such. Despite the objections of Moldova in 1992, the RF was mentioned as an intermediary in the texts of the agreements and as their guarantor, which in principle was not possible due to its direct involvement in hostilities⁶⁶. This status was not compatible with the fact that the international community insisted on the withdrawal of the Russian military contingent from the territory of Moldova, as well as taking into account the actual control of the Russian Federation over the “PMR”⁶⁷.

Moldova called upon determining the withdrawal of troops as a condition for acquiring certain preferences in international relations for the RF⁶⁸, but this call was not heard. The aggression of the RF against Moldova did not prevent it from gaining membership in the Council of Europe, as was the case with Chechnya. The uncertain status of Transnistria seriously limits the economic development of the country and complicates the process of democratization⁶⁹, which the Council of Europe recognized. However, the aggression did not become an obstacle to establishing partnership relations and cooperation between NATO and the RF⁷⁰.

The European Union (EU) only imposed sanctions on certain people from the leadership of the “PMR” in Moldova, such as a ban on international travel, as a response to the Russian Federation's (RF) illegal actions in the country⁷¹. No measures were taken against the RF itself.

It wasn't until 2018 that the United Nations (UN) passed a resolution condemning the RF's violation of Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and demanding the withdrawal of Russian troops from the country. However, out of the 193 states, only 50% supported the resolution, with the majority abstaining from voting⁷².

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) only recognized the RF's actions in the Transnistrian conflict as aggression and occupation of Moldova's territory after the RF's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022⁷³. This recognition took 30 years, during which the RF's military and political leadership was not held responsible for any international crimes committed during the conflict.

Despite this, there have been no complaints filed against the RF in the UN International Court of Justice or the European Court of Human Rights. The International Criminal Court does not have the jurisdiction to hold the RF's leadership accountable for the crime of aggression, and no separate tribunal has been established to address the RF's aggression against Moldova.

Currently, the RF sees the "PMR" under its control as a way to expand its territory, as evidenced by one of its goals in the 2022 invasion of Ukraine: to occupy southern Ukraine and establish a land corridor to Transnistria⁷⁴.

C. GEORGIA (SAKARTVELO)



The reasons behind Russia's aggressive actions towards Georgia can be traced back to the early 20th century. At that time, two areas called the Abkhaz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and the South Ossetian Autonomous Region were created within Soviet Georgia⁷⁵. When Georgia became independent in 1991, these regions remained a part of Georgia⁷⁶.

It's worth noting that Georgia declared its independence in 1991 by referring to the Act of 1918 and the constitution of the Georgian Democratic Republic of 1921. The Georgian SSR, which joined the USSR in 1922, was the successor to the Democratic Republic⁷⁷.

The Abkhazia situation

Before Georgia declared sovereignty, the SSR Abkhazia declared state sovereignty in 1990⁷⁸. Later in July 1992, in response to the restoration of the Georgian Democratic Republic of 1921, Abkhazia reinstated the 1925 Constitution of the Socialist Soviet Republic of Abkhazia, which considered the SSR Abkhazia a sovereign state⁷⁹. This led to hostilities between Georgia and Abkhazia in August 1992⁸⁰.

Initially, the Russian Federation supported Georgia's territorial integrity, including Abkhazia as part of Georgia. However, Russia began to support the "Abkhaz SSR"⁸¹ by providing political and material support and volunteers from the RF to the Abkhaz armed forces⁸². This support made it difficult for Georgia to achieve a military victory.

Georgia attempted to resolve the conflict diplomatically, with the RF acting as an intermediary⁸³, despite being a party to the conflict. In 1992, a cease-fire agreement was signed, but a month later, the Abkhaz armed forces, with RF support, took control of the city of Gagra, which could have led to the seizure of the autonomy's capital, Sukhumi⁸⁴.

In July 1993, the Georgian side made the same mistake by signing a new Tripartite Agreement on a temporary ceasefire under Russian pressure and fulfilling its conditions regarding the withdrawal of heavy military equipment⁸⁵. Less than a month later, Abkhaz armed formations, supported by the RF, entered Sukhumi⁸⁶, captured and executed 17 ministers of the legitimate government of Abkhazia⁸⁷.

Due to military operations, many ethnic Georgians were forced to leave their homes in the Abkhaz Autonomous Region⁸⁸, resulting in a significant demographic shift. The percentage of Georgians compared to other ethnic groups dropped from 45.7% to 20.6%⁸⁹.



<https://www.rferl.org/a/twenty-five-years-on-from-the-start-of-the-abkhaz-war/28690617.html>

Despite this, the international community did not react much to the conflict, and their efforts to resolve it were limited. The UN appointed a special envoy to Georgia in 1993 to try to find a peaceful solution⁹⁰, but the results of their activities were not reported. In August of the same year, the UN Security Council established the UN Mission in Georgia, consisting of military observers⁹¹. However, no Western countries openly criticized Russia's behavior, and there were no strong statements from the leaders of developed democratic countries.

Unfortunately, these measures did not stop the conflict from continuing, as in September 1993, Abkhazia, with Russia's support, resumed their offensive and captured Sukhumi⁹².

In the spring of 2008, the President of Georgia M. Saakashvili proposed "unlimited autonomy" to the Abkhazians, including representation in the executive and legislative branches of the Georgian government and the appointment of an Abkhazian representative as vice president with veto power over decisions affecting the region's status and rights⁹³. However, these attempts to control the region were unsuccessful, as the authorities of the self-proclaimed republic rejected the proposals, influenced by the Russian leadership's position. Russia's interests did not align with a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

The South Ossetia situation

In 1990, the South Ossetian Soviet Democratic Republic was formed⁹⁴ and had a Supreme Council as its highest legislative body⁹⁵. This happened before Georgia declared its sovereignty, and the South Ossetian Autonomous Region did the same thing as Abkhazia. They wanted to join North Ossetia, break away from Georgia, and form a single state within the renewed USSR⁹⁶. As a result, on December 11, 1990, Georgia's Supreme Council decided to abolish Ossetian autonomy⁹⁷, dissolve the region, and divide its territory into four new administrative units⁹⁸.

In 1991-1992, the political confrontation between Georgia and South Ossetia turned into an armed conflict⁹⁹. On May 29, 1992, the South Ossetian Republic's Supreme Council, which held elections in December 1990 not recognized by Georgia, declared the formation of an independent state of South Ossetia¹⁰⁰. Later that summer, they adopted a constitution¹⁰¹. To maintain security, a Russian battalion entered the territory of South Ossetia along with Georgian and Ossetian forces under a reconciliation agreement¹⁰². On July 24, 1992, Georgia and the Russian Federation signed an agreement on the principles of settling the Georgian-Ossetian conflict. According to the agreement, all parties had to completely cease fire, and Russia had to withdraw its military units from the Tskhinvali region¹⁰³. The agreement also established a Control Commission composed of representatives from opposing parties, based in Tskhinvali, to ensure security in the region. Mixed observer groups were created to support the gradual demilitarization of the conflict zone¹⁰⁴.

The international community's response to the conflict was weak and largely ineffective, similar to the situation with Abkhazia. In 1992, a group called the CSCE Mission¹⁰⁵ was formed in Georgia to help resolve the conflict, and they later included finding a solution to the conflict in Abkhazia as part of their tasks¹⁰⁶. The Mission joined the Mixed Control Commission, which had representatives from Georgia, Russia, South Ossetia, and North Ossetia, to help with this task¹⁰⁷. Although the Mission's mandate expanded over time¹⁰⁸, it is unclear what they accomplished in resolving the conflict.

Despite acting as an “intermediary” and “peacekeeper”, Russia continued to pursue its interests in the region. Beginning in 2000, Russia started issuing passports to residents of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, under the guise of humanitarian aid¹⁰⁹. This allowed them to have more influence over Georgia and gradually integrate the occupied territories into Russia's legislative and economic field.

In 2005, the President of Georgia, M. Saakashvili, proposed a peace plan for South Ossetia that included demilitarization, economic recovery, and granting the region autonomy within Georgia. However, the self-proclaimed republic's leaders rejected these proposals¹¹⁰.

Further aggravation of relations between the RF and Georgia and armed conflict

In 2004, M. Saakashvili became the President of Georgia, and this led to a further decline in the relationship between Georgia and Russia. Under Saakashvili's leadership, Georgia quickly adopted a Western model of development and achieved success, which posed a new challenge for Russia¹¹¹.

However, the relations between Georgia and Russia had already started to deteriorate earlier. In 1999, Georgia refused to continue participating in the Collective Security Treaty and started actively engaging with NATO¹¹², which worsened the situation.

During Saakashvili's presidency, which had significant support from the West, the leaders of NATO supported Georgia's desire to become a member of the organization in the future at the Bucharest summit in April 2008¹¹³. Russia opposed Georgia's plans for closer cooperation with NATO¹¹⁴, viewing it as a threat that could result in the loss of complete control over the Caucasus region.

By the summer of 2008, tensions between Russia and Georgia had escalated. In July of that year, Russian warplanes flew over Georgian territory during the US Secretary of State's visit to Tbilisi¹¹⁵. At the same time, military exercises involving Georgian-American and Russian forces took place in the region¹¹⁶.

In early July, there was an incident between the military forces of South Ossetia and Georgia that resulted in artillery fire. This caused the death and injury of about ten people¹¹⁷. From July 25 to August 4, there were more incidents where both sides used explosives and artillery weapons in territories controlled by South Ossetia and the Georgian government.

On August 7, 2008, both sides accused each other of firing at each other. Georgian President M. Saakashvili declared a ceasefire and asked the Ossetians to do the same. However, the South Ossetian forces continued firing. In response, Saakashvili announced that he would send ground troops into the territory¹¹⁸.

On August 8, 2008, Russia got involved in the conflict, saying it needed *protect the lives and dignity of Russian citizens*¹¹⁹, *wherever they are*¹²⁰. Russian armed forces launched a counteroffensive in South Ossetia and deployed 9,000 troops and 350 armored vehicles into Abkhazia, moving towards the center of the country¹²¹. With support from the Black Sea Fleet and aviation, Russian troops advanced towards Tbilisi. By August 10, most of Georgia's armed forces had withdrawn from South

Ossetia to defend Tbilisi. Georgian airfields and bases had already been destroyed by the Russian Air Force. Georgia then asked the United States to mediate ceasefire negotiations. The Russian Federation informed EU leaders that it had achieved its military goals in Georgia.



On August 15, 2008, Georgia and Russia agreed to a ceasefire through the mediation of the European Union¹²². The ceasefire agreement required Russian troops to withdraw to their pre-conflict positions¹²³. However, Russian Foreign Minister S. Lavrov said that Russian troops would remain in Georgia for as long as necessary¹²⁴. Less than two weeks after the ceasefire agreement, on August 26, 2008, former Russian President D. Medvedev declared the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia¹²⁵, violating internationally recognized borders of Georgia and contradicting the ceasefire agreement.

The international community was very concerned about the situation in Georgia during the conflict in 2008. However, their reaction was not enough given Russia's involvement in starting the war.

On August 9, 2008, the UN Secretary General expressed concern about the fighting in Georgia and called on all countries to respect the principle of state territorial integrity¹²⁶. The UN Security Council held daily meetings during the conflict, but could not agree on a resolution about Georgia because Russia and China disagreed with the text proposed by the United States, Great Britain, and France¹²⁷. Russia opposed the condemnation of its actions against Georgia's independence, attacks on civilians, and acts of terror¹²⁸.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted a resolution condemning Russia's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent republics, but not directly condemning their aggression against Georgia¹²⁹. The European Union expressed "grave concern" about the conflict and condemned Russia's "disproportionate reaction"¹³⁰.

Later, in December 2008, the EU established an independent fact-finding mission on the conflict¹³¹. The mission concluded that it was impossible to blame one side alone for the conflict¹³².

However, their findings were criticized¹³³.

Georgia asked international courts to investigate and prosecute those responsible for international crimes committed by Russia during the war in 2008. However, the judicial institutions were not effective enough, and no country joined Georgia's application to the International Court of Justice to hold Russia accountable as a state¹³⁴. Later, the Court ruled that it did not have jurisdiction over the case¹³⁵.

The application to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) was only partially successful because the court ruled that it did not have jurisdiction over events that occurred during the active phase of hostilities¹³⁶.

The International Criminal Court investigated the Russian-Georgian war, but it only issued arrest warrants for three individuals accused of war crimes in December 2022. These individuals were the Minister of Internal Affairs of the so-called South Ossetia, a police officer accountable to him, and the ombudsman of the so-called Republic of South Ossetia¹³⁷.

As a result, the Russian military and political leadership have not faced any consequences for their actions. They continue to violate Georgia's territorial integrity by providing long-lasting support to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, including forming "joint armed forces"¹³⁸, assigning their military personnel to senior positions in pseudo-republics¹³⁹, and even deploying air defense systems on their territories¹⁴⁰.

CONCLUSION

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Soviet Union weakened and eventually collapsed. However, Russia (RF) continued to interfere in the affairs of its neighboring independent states and limit their right to self-determination. This is because it cannot accept losing its geopolitical influence and territorial control over them, which it had under the Russian Empire and Soviet Union.

The RF initiated and intervened in inter-ethnic conflicts in a similar way: through direct military intervention, taking control of illegal armed groups or pseudo-states, and legitimizing them to incorporate them into independent states. The primary goal was to establish or expand political influence over those states and ensure their adherence to RF foreign policy. During these conflicts, the RF committed several international crimes, including aggression, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

However, there was no proper response from the international community to this behavior, and it took 30 years for the international community to respond. In every conflict where RF played an active role, including Transnistria, Chechnya, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia, and the 2008 Russian-Georgian war, the international community made the same mistake of not giving RF a fitting rebuff for its attempts to become a "new empire in old borders". The values that were once enshrined in the Helsinki Act of 1975 gradually became overshadowed by acts of appeasement towards the aggressor and fear of calling out their actions.

The military and political leaders of the Russian Federation have not faced criminal responsibility for their international crimes, and there were no actual sanctions imposed on them. Additionally, the RF enjoyed the reputation of being a "peacekeeper and mediator" in conflicts it actually initiated. Despite its involvement in conflicts, it continued to receive benefits from its international partnerships with organizations like the Council of Europe, the EU, the UN, and NATO. Attempts by countries like Georgia to influence the process independently were unsuccessful due to the difficulty of implementing international mechanisms of responsibility and the lack of support from the international community.

At the same time, the RF actively used its questionable membership in the UN Security Council as a tool to achieve its imperial ambitions, expand its geopolitical influence, and establish not only political but also military control over independent states and peoples. It did this by initiating and subsequently "freezing" conflicts, making it nearly impossible for these states and peoples to achieve their own national aspirations.



Regional
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SECTION

2



TEMPORARY OCCUPATION OF THE **AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC OF CRIMEA**

and the city of Sevastopol and its role
in Russia's preparation for full-scale invasion

In February-March 2014, the Russian Federation (RF) committed an act of armed aggression against Ukraine. As a result, Russia occupied the part of Ukraine's territory - the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol on the Crimean Peninsula. This went against the rules of international law, and Russia created a new political entity called the "Republic of Crimea" and made Sevastopol a city of special importance under Russian control¹⁴¹.

Russia sees the Crimean Peninsula as a place they can use to invade other parts of Ukraine in the future, so they started to militarize the area. Unfortunately, this process also involved forcing local people who were not loyal to Russia to leave the area. This led to systematic gross violations of human rights.

MILITARIZATION OF THE OCCUPIED CRIMEAN PENINSULA



In 2014, the Russian Minister of Defense, Serhii Shoigu, said that creating a powerful military presence in Crimea was a top priority¹⁴². After the annexation of Crimea, the Russian Federation deployed at least 61 military bases on the peninsula¹⁴³, almost the same number as the civilian settlements before annexation¹⁴⁴. The number of Russian troops stationed in Crimea has tripled, from 12,500 to 40,000, with the ultimate goal of having about 100,000 troops in the region¹⁴⁵. Additionally, Russia has significantly modernized and strengthened the land, air, and sea units stationed in Crimea, including adding 900 armored fighting vehicles, more than 195 tanks, 283 artillery and volley systems, 50 helicopters, and 100 aircraft of various types.

Russia has also enhanced its naval capabilities in the Black Sea by adding 13 missile ships and submarines and the possibility of modular weapons on patrol ships¹⁴⁶. They have deployed nuclear weapons carriers to the peninsula and updated their nuclear warhead storage facilities. From 2014 to 2021, Russia conducted 95 training exercises and maneuvers at the Crimean training ground called "Opuk."

Since 2014, the industry in the occupied Crimea has been focused on military objectives. In the early months of the annexation, the Russian Ministry of Defense seized control of 23 Ukrainian businesses in Crimea to support military needs. Russia also increased the number of electronic warfare (EW) units on the peninsula, which turned it into a restricted access zone and a base for cyber attacks against other countries.

Initially, the management of the Crimean peninsula was carried out by active or former military personnel, and all military units on the peninsula were incorporated into the Southern Military District with headquarters in Rostov-on-Don, RF.

This militarization of the Crimean peninsula has negatively impacted international security and undermined confidence-building measures in Europe. It has also resulted in numerous violations of international humanitarian and human rights laws, including war crimes such as forced conscription, mobilization, and indoctrination.

Since 2015, Russia has conducted 16 conscription campaigns in Crimea¹⁴⁷, resulting in more than 37,000 young men between the ages of 18 and 27 being drafted into the Russian Armed Forces¹⁴⁸. The militarization of education has also affected at least 218,974 school-age children in Crimea¹⁴⁹.

Before the full-scale invasion, the occupied Crimea had a significant military capacity that posed a threat not only to the Black Sea region but also to other areas, including Europe, the South Caucasus, and the Middle East. In 2018, British Vice Admiral Clive Johnstone mentioned in a speech at the Atlantic Council that "Russia is preparing itself for a period of intense challenge ahead"¹⁵⁰. The international community has denounced the militarization of the Crimean peninsula through various resolutions passed by the UN General Assembly from 2018 to 2022¹⁵¹.

LARGE-SCALE AND SYSTEMATIC VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

After gaining control over the Crimean peninsula, the Russian Federation started applying its own laws and law enforcement practices, which goes against the international law. Russian government agencies such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), the Federal Security Service (FSB), the Federal Investigative Committee, and the Prosecutor General's Office enforced Russian law in Crimea, conducted security, counterintelligence, counter-terrorism activities, and fought organized crime and corruption. The Russian MIA operated the "national police" in Crimea. Additionally, occupation courts established by the Russian Federation were used to persecute individuals who were not loyal to the government, and there were also efforts to forcibly change the demographics of the Crimean population.

The US State Department Report on Human Rights Practices: Ukraine - Crimea, reveals that the Russian occupation authorities have committed significant human rights violations and abuses against the civilian population of Crimea. These violations include:

- torture, including punitive psychiatric incarceration;
- mistreatment of persons in detention as punishment or to extort confessions;

- harsh prison conditions and transfer of prisoners to Russia;
- arbitrary arrest and detention; political prisoners;
- pervasive and arbitrary interference with privacy;
- severe restrictions on free expression, the press, and the internet, including violence against journalists and website blocking;
- gross and widespread suppression of freedom of assembly and religion;
- severe restriction of freedom of association, including barring the Crimean Tatar Mejlis;
- significant restrictions on freedom of movement;
- restrictions on political participation;
- systemic corruption;
- and violence and systemic discrimination against Crimean Tatars and ethnic Ukrainians¹⁵².



Reports on the preliminary study of the situation in Ukraine by the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, particularly for 2020, concluded that some of the violations committed have elements of war crimes and crimes against humanity¹⁵³. The European Court of Human Rights also recognized jurisdiction in the international case *Ukraine v. Russia (re Crimea)*, which involves the violation of 12 articles of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms¹⁵⁴. Furthermore, annual resolutions of the UN General Assembly since 2016 have condemned the Russian Federation's violations of human rights in Crimea¹⁵⁵.

The occupied Crimean peninsula has been transformed into a place of fear and lack of freedom, and this is the basis for the implementation of a policy of violent change in the demographic composition of the population. The Russian Federation is using official force, coercion, and malicious neglect of obligations following the norms of international law to gain full control over

the Crimean peninsula and achieve its "irreversible" inclusion in the Russian Federation. These actions are not only accompanied by massive and systematic violations of human rights, some of which have the elements of war crimes and crimes against humanity but can also lead to uncontrolled processes in the long term, such as the deepening of ethnic conflicts, environmental disasters, political resistance, and cession, etc.

The violation of various political, civil, economic, social, and cultural rights has led to a large number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Crimea to Ukraine's mainland, estimated to be between 60,000 and 100,000 people¹⁵⁶. However, the Russian legislation does not prohibit the transfer of Russian citizens to the occupied territory. In fact, the Russian government extends its federal programs and offers financial and tax incentives, strategic planning and infrastructure projects, and propaganda to encourage Russian citizens to settle in the Crimean Peninsula. As a result, the number of Russian colonizers has reached between 500,000 and 800,000 people as of early 2022¹⁵⁷.

It is worth noting that the Russian Federation's efforts to eliminate Ukrainian identity in Crimea have the characteristics of genocide against the Ukrainian nation. The occupied territory has become a testing ground for various tools and practices, which were then used with greater reach and brutality during a full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022.

REACTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY



The international community had limited ability to respond to Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. It wasn't until March 6, 2014 that the first legal assessment of Russia's actions was given. In a joint statement, leaders of the European Union condemned Russia's unprovoked violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, calling for the immediate withdrawal of Russian armed forces from Crimea and for international observers to be allowed into the occupied

territory¹⁵⁸. However, no strict measures were taken, and the only visible reaction was the suspension of EU-Russia bilateral negotiations on visa issues. On March 7, 2014, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe made a similar statement¹⁵⁹, also suspending the Russian delegation's right to vote and its right to participate in the governing bodies of the Assembly and in election observation missions¹⁶⁰.

Regarding the UN, on February 28, 2014, the Security Council called for "maximum restraint" and "an inclusive dialogue recognizing the diversity of Ukrainian society"¹⁶¹. On March 27, 2014, the General Assembly passed Resolution A/RES/68/262 "Territorial Integrity of Ukraine," confirming Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. 100 states voted in favor of the resolution. Subsequent UN actions involved periodic thematic resolutions on the situation in Crimea, monitoring of human rights, and a non-recognition policy. However, during the ongoing 8 years of aggression, none of the international documents contained provisions for bringing guilty parties to justice under international law.

After the "referendum" on March 16, 2014, the international community's statements became more decisive. The President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, declared that the EU's goal was to negotiate and "stop Russia's actions against Ukraine and restore Ukraine's sovereignty". Personal sanctions were imposed on 32 individuals, and the planned EU-Russia summit was canceled, and meetings with Russia in a bilateral format were also refused. At the end of June 2014, the EU introduced economic restrictions, including a ban on imports from the occupied Crimean peninsula, restrictions on investments in certain sectors, entry constraints, and a ban on exporting certain goods and technologies. Although these sanctions had a short-term economic effect, they did not lead to significant changes in Russian politics.

Following Russia's escalation of the conflict in eastern Ukraine and the downing of the Malaysia Airlines plane, which was on a scheduled flight MH17 and on which 298 people died (including 4 German citizens)¹⁶², the United States and the EU imposed more severe sanctions, such as restricting state-owned banks' operations, imposing a weapons embargo, banning the sale of dual-purpose technologies and export of equipment for the oil industry. These sanctions forced Russia to restructure its public debt and cost the country a potential \$479 billion in foreign investment. The GDP of the Russian Federation decreased by 1-8%, according to various calculations from 2014 to 2021¹⁶³.



Prior to 2021, there were no diplomatic efforts to address the annexation of Crimea, but on August 23, 2021, the Crimea platform was launched with representatives from 47 countries and organizations in attendance at the summit¹⁶⁴. Meanwhile, for the occupied regions of Eastern Ukraine, diplomatic initiatives have taken place through the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy format, although these efforts have largely operated on Russian terms.



World leaders have expressed their belief that the response to the annexation of Crimea was limited. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, for instance, has noted that a stronger response would have been appropriate to discourage further aggression from Russian President Putin¹⁶⁵. Similarly, former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson called the West's reaction to the annexation a "terrible mistake," noting that it allowed Putin to proceed with his aggression in Ukraine with little fear of punishment¹⁶⁶.

ROLE OF THE CRIMEAN PENINSULA IN THE COURSE OF A FULL-SCALE INVASION

The Crimean Peninsula's strategic location has made it an essential part of Russian aggression. Even before the full-scale invasion, Russia was using the territory and the Black Sea Fleet to supply weapons to Libya and Syria. Russia also regularly blocked the Kerch Strait, which led to the seizure of Ukrainian Navy ships and crew members in 2018, violating Ukraine's sovereignty and international law. In July 2021, Putin signed a law allowing the Russian National Guard to blockade parts of the Black and Azov seas to legitimize its maritime aggression¹⁶⁷. These provisions were used for a new offensive before the full-scale invasion in February 2022.

From February 24, 2022 Crimea has played a vital role in the ongoing armed conflict as an excellent bridgehead that contributed to the rapid capture of some areas of southern Ukraine. One of Russia's strategic goals is to gain complete control over the south coast of Ukraine to establish its own rules in the Black Sea region and get closer to NATO states. After the annexation of Crimea, Russia's control over the Black Sea coastline tripled from 421 kilometers to 1,171 kilometers, achieving its strategic geopolitical goal to get closer to Turkey along the length of the Black Sea coast¹⁶⁸.

Russia has blocked freedom of navigation in the Sea of Azov, violating international law and blocking innocent passage within Ukraine's territorial waters near Crimea. Russia moves ships from the Caspian Sea to the Sea of Azov and then south to the Black Sea through the Kerch Strait using the Volga-Don Canal. Russia's next step in its "Maritime doctrine" is the final annexation of the Black Sea region of Ukraine, Transnistria, and the coast of Romania.



In 2019, Russia "rented" the port of Tartus under an agreement with Syria, which has been transformed into a naval base to expand its presence in the Mediterranean and Red Seas in the Persian Gulf (Arabian Gulf) region, creating new security threats¹⁶⁹. Russia's control over the seas is now a tool of geopolitics, and it is blocking exports and causing a food crisis while ensuring the export of stolen Ukrainian grain to satellite states.

The Crimean Peninsula, which was annexed by Russia, is strategically important for military purposes. Russia uses the Kerch bridge, Tavrida highway, and railway to transport weapons, ammunition, and personnel to participate in the armed conflict in Ukraine. This is in violation of International Humanitarian Law. Russia is also carrying out forced conscription in the occupied territory, with a mobilization campaign using the slogan "from each subject of the federation by the battalion". Before the full-scale invasion, the Russian army had about 5,000 Crimean conscripts, and at least some of them were participating in the new stage of aggression¹⁷⁰. It is known that at least 159 Crimean residents who were part of the armed forces of the Russian Federation were killed during the armed conflict, among whom 80 could be citizens of Ukraine¹⁷¹.

Russia also launches missile attacks on mainland Ukraine from Crimea. As of mid-2022 alone, 750 cruise missiles of various types were launched from Crimea¹⁷². It also uses civilian infrastructure facilities such as hospitals, schools, and morgues for its military needs. Crimean medics are also being forced to participate in the armed conflict.

Furthermore, Russia is using the occupied Crimea as a base to occupy other regions of Ukraine. They are financing a puppet administration in the Kherson region from the Russian budget. Educators from newly occupied territories are being "reprogrammed" in Crimea to further Russify and militarize Ukrainian children. Many displaced Ukrainian citizens, including unaccompanied children in orphanages, summer camps, and medical facilities, are being held in Crimea, with the aim of further deportation to the Russian Federation.

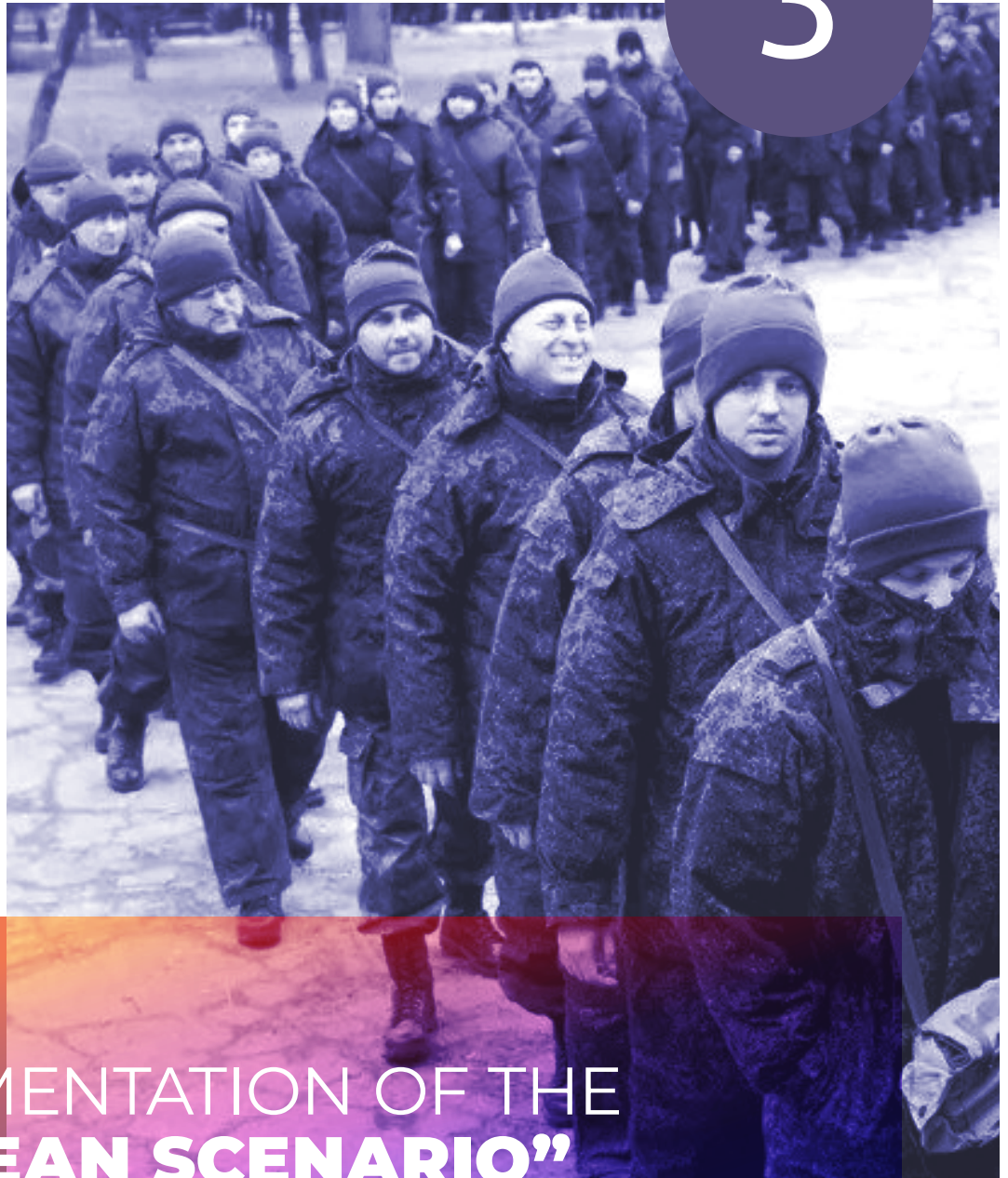
CONCLUSION

The international community's response to the annexation of Crimea was mostly subdued. Even statements and resolutions condemning the violation of international law did not include specific measures for holding those responsible accountable or returning Crimea to Ukraine. Sanctions, which were sporadic and moderate due to the desire to maintain economic relations, did not have a lasting economic impact or prevent war crimes and crimes against humanity. This has led to significant changes in Crimea's demographics, politics, society, culture, and environment. Russia has also militarized the area, using it as a base for offensives and supporting aggression. The citizens of Ukraine, both in Crimea and beyond, continue to suffer from widespread and systematic violations of their fundamental rights and freedoms. Without Ukraine's sovereignty over Crimea being fully restored, there can be no lasting resolution to the armed conflict or the establishment of peace.



SECTION

3



IMPLEMENTATION OF THE “CRIMEAN SCENARIO”

in the newly occupied territories
after the start of a full-scale invasion

THE MINSK AGREEMENTS AS A TOOL FOR DELAYING THE LARGE-SCALE AGGRESSION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AGAINST UKRAINE



After Russia took control of Crimea in 2014, they also intervened militarily in eastern Ukraine and supported illegal armed groups known as the LPR and DPR. To bring an end to the conflict and create lasting peace, the so-called Minsk Agreements were signed in 2014-2015. This was done by the Trilateral Contact Group (made up of Russia, Ukraine, and the OSCE) and the Normandy format (Germany, Ukraine, Russia, and France). The illegal armed groups also signed the agreements, even though they were not part of the Contact Group or the Normandy format.

The negotiations were held in a complicated military and political situation for Ukraine and were signed under duress. The first set of agreements, known as Minsk-I, was signed after a tragic event called the Ilovaisk tragedy, where Ukrainian soldiers were surrounded and shot by Russian troops. The second set of agreements, Minsk-II, was signed while there was a risk of Russian forces advancing further into Ukraine during the fighting for the town of Debaltseve.

The Agreements included:

- 1** cessation of hostilities;
- 2** adoption of the law on the special status of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, which was supposed to provide, among other things:
 - “the right to linguistic self-determination”, which, in particular, could mean the introduction of Russian as the second state language;
 - the right to appoint judges and prosecutors and create “people’s police units”;
 - the right to cross-border cooperation with the RF.
- 3** adoption of a law that would exclude criminal prosecution of members of the IAGs;

- 4 carrying out constitutional reform in Ukraine to ensure the granting of the mentioned special status to the two regions;
- 5 conducting elections to LGB in Donetsk and Luhansk regions;
- 6 withdrawal of foreign (Russian) troops from the territory of Ukraine, disarmament of IAGs;
- 7 the start of regaining control over the Ukrainian-Russian border after the elections¹⁷³.

The Minsk Agreements did not address the status of Crimea.

Despite not having the right to interfere in other countries' internal affairs, the Russian Federation (RF) influenced the content of amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine through the assistant of the President of the RF. The possibility of federalizing Ukraine, similar to the Russian plan for resolving the conflict in Transnistria, was not ruled out¹⁷⁴. The RF's demand for amending the Constitution of Ukraine aimed to legitimize the results of their armed aggression against Ukraine, which is a violation of international law.

In the Minsk Agreements, the Russian Federation attempted to present the events in Ukraine as an "internal conflict," concealing its aggression. As in past conflicts, the RF claimed to act as a "mediator" between the parties instead of a participant. Meanwhile, the illegal armed groups (IAGs) were referred to in the Agreements as "representatives of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions". However, they had no legal authority to represent the people of those regions in Ukraine and were entirely under the control of the RF.

If criminal responsibility is excluded for members of illegal armed groups (IAGs), and elections are held under the control of the AF RF like in Crimea, former IAG members and agents of the Russian Federation could take seats in Ukrainian parliament and local bodies. The right to form a "people's militia" seemed like an attempt by the Russian Federation to legitimize the IAGs under its control.

By implementing the Minsk Agreements, the Russian Federation hoped to gain control over Ukraine's pro-European development, mainly to prevent its movement towards the West.

Ukraine has partially implemented these agreements, such as adopting the *Law on Special Procedures of Local Governance Bodies (LGB) in Donetsk and Luhansk regions* and making proposals to amend the Constitution¹⁷⁵. However, the Russian Federation refused to recognize its military presence on Ukrainian territory and failed to withdraw its troops, a direct obligation under the Minsk Agreements.

Recently, a former assistant to the President of the Russian Federation stated that they had no intention of implementing the Minsk Agreements after they were signed¹⁷⁶.

The RF needed to have elections under their armed control to have leverage over Ukrainian politics through its agents in state bodies. But since they were unable to do so, on February 21, 2022, the President of the RF declared the recognition of independence for LPR and DPR and implementation of peacekeeping functions on the territory of Ukraine¹⁷⁷. This is similar to the RF President's actions regarding Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia in 2008.

On February 22, 2022, the President of the RF stated that the Minsk Agreements no longer exist¹⁷⁸. The Normandy format, which was supposed to address Russian aggression in Crimea and eastern Ukraine, only resulted in freezing the conflict, which led to further aggression in 2022.

The RF's goal remains to establish full control over Ukraine, prevent its independent development, and use it as a military bridgehead for imperial ambitions towards Moldova and the Baltic states.

INSTRUMENTS OF MILITARIZATION OF THE NEWLY OCCUPIED TERRITORIES



CONSCRIPTION

The RF conducted conscription for military service in the areas of Donetsk and Luhansk before their invasion in February 2022. This conscription followed the same principles as in Crimea and the RF, with 12-month duration. However, before the invasion, conscription turned into mobilization¹⁷⁹, with men being detained without procedures and taken to unknown locations¹⁸⁰. Even minors over 17 were reportedly subject to mobilization¹⁸¹.

After the invasion, mobilization started almost immediately in the occupied territories of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, and Kharkiv regions¹⁸². This was preceded by the issuance of Russian passports and summonses from occupation authorities¹⁸³. People were forcibly registered for military service, taken to military commissariats or commandant's offices, and in some cases, immediately drafted into the Russian army¹⁸⁴. Men who did not receive Russian or DPR/LPR passports but lived permanently in these areas were also subject to conscription. Those who refused to serve were prosecuted, often with the use of force.

The forced military service spread fear among the local population, who tried to leave the occupied territory despite any obstacles.

EDUCATION

The Russian Federation (RF) has imposed changes on the education system in the territories it occupies. After taking control of the Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia regions, Russian textbooks were brought in to replace Ukrainian textbooks, which were either exported or destroyed¹⁸⁵. These Russian textbooks contain war propaganda and militarized education, aimed at erasing Ukrainian identity in Ukrainian children.

It is impossible to refuse to study according to Russian educational programs in the occupied territories, as the occupying power threatens to remove children from their families¹⁸⁶.

Russia has also brought hundreds of Russian teachers to the occupied territories, offering higher wages and other material preferences¹⁸⁷. This is similar to their approach in the occupied Crimea.

The transfer of Ukrainian children to study according to Russian standards and programs with the involvement of RF teachers is an example of integrating occupied territories into the Russian Federation.

In the newly occupied territories, there have been documented cases of searches of children and their families, checks of personal belongings, and calls to educational institutions to identify and prosecute individuals with a pro-Ukrainian position¹⁸⁸. The Russian occupation authorities carried out similar measures in the Crimean Peninsula.

Overall, Russia is imposing its education system on occupied territories, erasing Ukrainian identity in children, and using tactics of intimidation and prosecution to enforce compliance with Russian educational programs.

LARGE-SCALE AND SYSTEMATIC VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

DEPORTATION OF THE CIVILIAN POPULATION

As of October 3, 2022, the UNHCR reported that 2,852,395 Ukrainians had been deported to Russia¹⁸⁹. However, Russia claims that there are 4.5 million Ukrainians currently living within its borders¹⁹⁰.

Although the way in which people are being deported during a full-scale invasion is different from what happened in Crimea, Russia's general approach remains the same. Those who are deemed disloyal are made to live in such terrible conditions that they are forced to flee towards unoccupied territory within Ukraine. Others are forced to move to Russia using various forms of coercion. For example, Russia blocks people's ability to leave the areas of active hostilities under Ukrainian control¹⁹¹, which means that civilians have no choice but to flee towards Russia¹⁹². Deportations are taking place in different regions of Russia, including far-flung areas such as Siberia and the Far East¹⁹³. To manage the deportation process, Russia has established 807 temporary accommodation centers throughout its territory. Once they arrive, Ukrainians are offered the chance to apply for refugee status¹⁹⁴. Many people who find themselves outside of the dangerous areas of conflict try to leave Russia immediately and head to other countries¹⁹⁵.



<https://foma.ru/marija-lvova-belova-pomogla-voossoedinitsja-v-priemnyh-semjah-bratjam-i-sestram-sirotam-s-donbassa.html>

FORCIBLE TRANSFER OF CHILDREN

Various estimates suggest that between 260,000 to 700,000 children were forcefully deported to Russia¹⁹⁶. Ukrainian authorities have confirmed 16,207 deported children, but only 307 have been returned¹⁹⁷. Russia claims that it removes children for reasons such as "evacuation," "rehabilitation," "re-education," and "dispensation". Since the start of the full-scale invasion, minors from Ukraine have been forcibly relocated to at least 57 regions of Russia, including remote areas like Sakhalin Island¹⁹⁸. At least 2,445 Ukrainian children were taken to Crimea under the pretext of evacuation¹⁹⁹, and another 10,000²⁰⁰ were taken to 7 special sanatoriums or camps for "rehabilitation and re-education"²⁰¹. While under the control of Russian agents, Ukrainian children are subjected to Russification, indoctrination, and militarization to promote Russian national identity²⁰².

Additionally, the forced transfer of Ukrainian children to Russian families for upbringing began in 2014, after Russians adopted at least 12 children from the occupied Crimean Peninsula through the *Train of Hope* program²⁰³. This policy has taken on genocidal characteristics. Since the full-scale invasion began, at least 400 children have been placed in Russian families²⁰⁴. In annexed Crimea, 28 families expressed their desire to adopt children from newly occupied territories as early as April 2022²⁰⁵.

Maria Lvova-Belova, the Commissioner for the Rights of the Child under the President of Russia, has been personally responsible for the forced transfer of Ukrainian children to Russian custody since the start of the invasion. She facilitates the adoption process and justifies Russia's criminal policy, which has characteristics of the crime of genocide²⁰⁶.



FORCED IMPOSITION OF CITIZENSHIP OF THE AGGRESSOR STATE

The process of granting Russian citizenship to people living in newly occupied territories is similar to what happened in Crimea in 2014²⁰⁷. When these territories were annexed, everyone living there was automatically granted Russian citizenship. Like in Crimea, it was difficult for people to refuse this citizenship²⁰⁸.

In 2019, Russia started issuing passports to people in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions using a simplified procedure approved by the Russian president²⁰⁹. By July 2022, over 611,000 people had received Russian passports²¹⁰. This is because having a Russian passport is often necessary for things like getting a job or traveling freely within Russia²¹¹.

In the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions, the forced passportization of the population began even before these territories were officially annexed. Putin's decree on July 11, 2022, added these regions to the list of places where people must be given Russian passports²¹². As of mid-September, 15,000 people in these regions had received Russian passports²¹³.

After the announcement on September 30, 2022, that these territories were annexed, everyone living there was automatically considered a citizen of Russia, and obtaining a Russian passport became mandatory. Without a passport people could not exercise their rights in political, social, or economic spheres. It is important to note that along with rights, people also received responsibilities, such as the duty to *defend* Russia with weapons.



https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid04FqnPmtzuDwmFz72eouv4anwftoaZR6qdRAmtZxgauhVSCzykbsDj9t4W4RHc4Jl&id=100002276907245

ILLEGAL DETENTION, ABDUCTION, AND TORTURE OF CIVILIANS

Since the beginning of the occupation of Crimea in March 2014, there have been at least 43 cases of enforced disappearances documented. Russia used abductions to target people who disagreed with the policies of the occupying power. The victims were detained without following proper procedures, often at night by Russian special services or military personnel without proper identification. The detentions were not registered, and lawyers were not allowed to see the detainees. During these abductions, people were taken to unknown locations, tortured, and cut off from the outside world. Many of these people were eventually found in Russia²¹⁴.

This policy continued in the territories occupied since the full-scale invasion in 2022. Since then, about 1,700 people have been abducted by the AF RF, the FSB, and IAG in the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions²¹⁵. These actions were meant to instill fear in the local population and suppress any attachment to Ukraine.

People who are abducted are kept in terrible conditions, sometimes for more than nine months, without registration and in unsanitary, ill-equipped facilities. They often have no access to water, food, or medicine²¹⁶. The rule of keeping women, children, and men separated is usually ignored.

Many of the victims of illegal detentions and enforced disappearances are civilians who publicly supported a pro-Ukrainian position. This includes local authorities and self-government officials, military veterans, volunteers²¹⁷, activists, journalists, bloggers, and Ukrainian cultural and religious figures.

Detentions often occur during mandatory filtering procedures when people try to leave the occupied territory. As of August 2022, there were at least 21 filtration camps operating in the Donetsk region²¹⁸. Those who don't pass the filtering measures are detained and sent to prisons in the so-called DPR and LPR (Olenivka, Donetsk) or in Russia (Taganrog, Kamensk-Shakhtinsk, Bryansk)²¹⁹.

In the first few weeks of the full-scale invasion, the Russians kidnapped 13 heads of communities from 6 regions of Ukraine²²⁰. This doesn't include village heads, deputies, and other government employees who were also abducted (such as Ivan Fedorov²²¹, Oleksandr Shapovalov²²², and Oleksandr Zarivnyi²²³).

The head of a village in Kyiv region, Olga Sukhenko, along with her husband and son, were kidnapped, tortured and killed²²⁴. Additionally, 76 law enforcement officers are missing or have been abducted²²⁵.

From February 24, 2022 to November 2, 2022, Russia committed at least 457 crimes against journalists and media in Ukraine²²⁶. This led to the death of eight journalists²²⁷, including Pierre Zakzhevsky, a cameraman for Fox News²²⁸, Max Levin, a photojournalist²²⁹, and Mantas Kvedaravicius, a Lithuanian director who was tortured to death in Mariupol²³⁰.

In March 2022, the Russian military arrested the 78-year-old writer Yevhen Bal, and consequently he died due to torture²³¹. The body of poet Volodymyr Vakulenko, who was detained in Kapitolivka in Kharkiv Oblast, was found six months later during the exhumation of a mass grave in the city of Izium²³².

Four priests have also been victims of violent abductions and unjustified detentions²³³.

Despite the prohibition by International Humanitarian Law²³⁴, the Russian military used torture on civilians in the Kherson and Zaporizhia regions²³⁵ to extract information about the location of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and territorial defense forces, or for their own pleasure²³⁶. These methods of torture include starvation and thirst, being forced to stay in an unnatural position for a long time, threats of death, mock executions, application of electric current, and verbal and psychological violence²³⁷.



VIOLATIONS AGAINST THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF UKRAINE

Since 2014, many cultural and historical monuments on the Crimean Peninsula have been destroyed or damaged. This has happened both under the guise of "*restoration*" and "*reconstruction*" (such as the Bagçesaray Palace of the Crimean Khans²³⁸, the Ancient City of Tauric Chersonese and its Chora²³⁹, and the Crimean Astrophysical Observatory²⁴⁰) and through the construction of new infrastructure facilities. For instance, over 90 historical sites were

demolished²⁴¹ and more than 1 million artifacts were removed²⁴² during the construction of the Tauride highway and Kerch bridge²⁴³. During 2014-2020, at least 410 permits were granted to conduct archaeological excavations on the peninsula for the benefit of the Ministry of Defense and Administration of the President of Russia, in violation of international law²⁴⁴. The looting of Ukraine's cultural heritage in Crimea is also aided by "black archaeologists," who are partially tolerated by the occupation authorities.

The transfer of Ukraine's cultural values under Russian control and the appropriation of cultural heritage and history have become widespread. According to the Institute of Material Memory of the Russian Academy of Sciences, approximately 2 million artifacts were discovered during the archaeological excavations of Chersonese in 2021²⁴⁵, and 200,000 of them were taken to Russia.

Since the full-scale invasion of the RF the damage and destruction of Ukraine's cultural infrastructure has increased dramatically. This is mainly due to active hostilities and indiscriminate air and missile-artillery attacks. According to the MCIP of Ukraine, from February 22 to December 25, 2022, 1,189 cultural infrastructure objects were damaged, with 446 completely destroyed²⁴⁶. As of January 23, 2023, UNESCO confirmed damage to 236 objects, including 105 religious sites, 18 museums, 83 buildings of historical and/or artistic interest, 19 monuments, and 11 libraries²⁴⁷. The eastern and Kyiv regions of Ukraine have been most affected, with about 80% of the cultural infrastructure in these areas being damaged or destroyed.

Several important monuments have been damaged or destroyed, such as the Art Museum of Arkhip Kuindzhi and the Drama Theater in Mariupol, the ancient barrows of the rocks of Kherson, and the National Literary and Memorial Museum of H. Skovoroda in the Kharkiv region²⁴⁸.

Meanwhile, the Russian Federation has been looting cultural values from the occupied territories, with over 30 museums in Kherson, Mariupol, and Melitopol being looted or damaged, resulting in over 12,000 cultural treasures being stolen²⁴⁹. This is the largest collective looting of art objects since World War II and aims to deprive Ukraine of its cultural heritage²⁵⁰.

The destruction of monuments is often disguised as reconstruction and improvement works in the occupied territories. For example, the occupying authorities of Mariupol started the *reconstruction* of Arnautov's House with a clock and workshop - a historical building from the early 20th century - but ended up completely destroying the monument in January 2023²⁵¹.

Overall, the damage and destruction of Ukraine's cultural infrastructure has been significant and is part of the Russian Federation's attempt to erase Ukrainian history and identity.

CONCLUSION

One of the main reasons why Ukraine is experiencing a major armed conflict in 2022 was because the world community did not respond strongly enough to Russia's annexation of Crimea and its armed conflict in Donbas. The lack of a proper response gave Russia the impression that it could continue its aggressive behavior without consequences.

The Russian Federation has committed numerous international crimes in the past and continues

to pose a threat to global security. Despite this, the international community has been hesitant to hold Russia accountable for its actions, even though it is a member of the UN Security Council. This has allowed Russia to act with impunity, including annexing territories like Zaporizhia, Donetsk, Luhansk, and Kherson.

Russia has increased its military presence in these areas and is forcing Ukrainian citizens to serve in its armed forces, putting them in armed conflict with their own country. Additionally, Russia is militarizing education and other areas of political and socio-economic life in these regions and carrying out forced passportization.



In summary, the world's insufficient response to Russia's previous actions, coupled with its lack of accountability for international crimes, has enabled Russia to continue its aggression, leading to the significant armed conflict in Ukraine in 2022.

The Occupying Power's actions are violating human rights in a large-scale and systematic manner. These violations include deporting civilians, including children, and illegally transferring them to Russian families for "*re-education*," which *deprives Ukraine of its future*. Russia is also seeking to appropriate cultural heritage in the occupied territories and destroy it if it cannot take ownership of it to *deprive Ukraine of its past*.

Russia conducts such actions as illegal detention, abduction, and torture, attacks on political and cultural figures and activists, sexual violence, forced service in the occupying state's armed forces, forced deportation of civilians, destruction and abduction of cultural heritage. Such actions violate IHL and can be qualified as war crimes and crimes against humanity²⁵².

The forcible transfer of Ukrainian children to Russian families²⁵³ is an act of genocide against the Ukrainian nation²⁵⁴, which is prohibited under Article 2 of the Genocide Convention and Article 6(e) of the Rome Statute of the ICC²⁵⁵.

The forced delivery of Russian passports to Ukrainian citizens in territories occupied by Russia violates the norms and principles of IHL, particularly the obligation of Russia as the Occupying Power to respect the *status quo ante bellum principle*²⁵⁶. The conflicts in Transnistria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia demonstrate that the justification for Russia's aggression often becomes the need to "*protect Russian citizens*" on the territories of other sovereign states.

Russia's actions aim to change the demographic composition of the population of the occupied territories, eradicating Ukrainian identity from the local people, and fully integrating the annexed territories into the Russian state system and society. These actions are part of the imperial policies of Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, which the modern Russian Federation adopted to restore its former empire. Russia's continued use of territories in frozen conflicts and illegally seized regions will allow it to experiment with new policies to implement its agenda. This is why returning the occupied territories to Ukrainian government control is crucial in overcoming the problem of pseudo-state entities created by Russia and restoring the territorial integrity of sovereign states in the post-Soviet space.

The world needs to learn from its previous mistakes to prevent future conflicts.



SECTION

4



BRIEF ANALYSIS OF RISKS AND THREATS **POSED BY RUSSIAN AGGRESSION**

to the international community

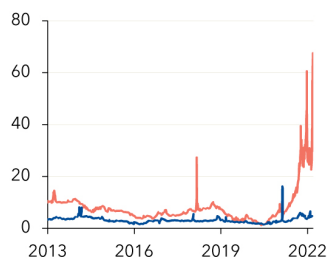
Growing pressures

Prices for energy, grains, and metals soared since the invasion of Ukraine, signaling that inflation rates are poised to accelerate.

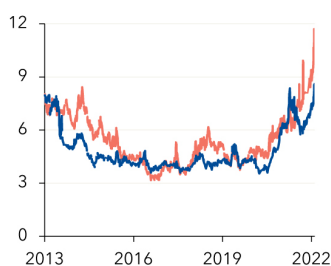
Brent Crude Oil
(\$US/barrel)



European & US Natural Gas*
(\$US/MMBtu)



Corn, Wheat
(\$US/bushel)



Metals Index**
(2016=100)



Source: Bloomberg, USDA, Datastream, and IMF staff calculations.
Note: *European & US natural gas prices use the Dutch TTF and Henry Hub as proxies, respectively. **Base Metals Price Index includes aluminum, cobalt, copper, iron ore, lead, molybdenum, nickel, tin, uranium, and zinc.

IMF

<https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2022/03/15/blog-how-war-in-ukraine-is-reverberating-across-worlds-regions-031522>

The policy of appeasing an aggressor, which involves giving in to their demands and avoiding holding them accountable for international crimes, **has negative consequences** not only for the affected state but also for the entire international community. In the current situation where the Russian Federation has launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, following a pattern of aggressive behavior towards other sovereign states and former USSR subjects, the short-term consequences will include challenges related to regional and international security, food, humanitarian and migration situations, as well as the international legal system.

IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

The armed conflict between Ukraine and Russia highlights the need to prevent its escalation, which also requires attention to stabilizing situations in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Western Balkans, Central Asia, and easing tensions in the Persian Gulf and resolving the political crisis in Venezuela²⁵⁷. Risks of negative developments also exist for Moldova and Georgia, which are victims of Russian aggression, and the Baltic States, despite their NATO membership. These risks are mainly due to Russian agents occupying some of these states' territories, their close proximity to the Russian border, and significant Russian-speaking populations due to the USSR's colonial demographic policies. Pro-Kremlin political elites in Armenia and Belarus, as well as states traditionally in the RF's sphere of influence, such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, are also at risk.

Moreover, the economic crisis resulting from Russian aggression against Ukraine has caused rising prices, which could lead to tensions in states with weak social protection systems, limited employment opportunities, and unpopular governments, particularly in the Sahel region, Central and South America, and Central Asia. Internal unrest could escalate into armed conflicts, further

increasing economic fragmentation, particularly in trade and technology²⁵⁸.

States have amassed significant resources to conduct regional and international armed conflicts. However, it is dangerous to provide weapons to states with authoritarian regimes or where the population is impoverished and desires radical changes. Despite this, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute reports a consistent increase in the production and purchase of weapons, indicating a new arms race²⁵⁹. This also strains leading economies, which are forced to increase defense budgets in response to the threat of conflict. For instance, Germany has planned to spend €100 billion more and increase defense spending to more than 2% of GDP from 2024²⁶⁰.

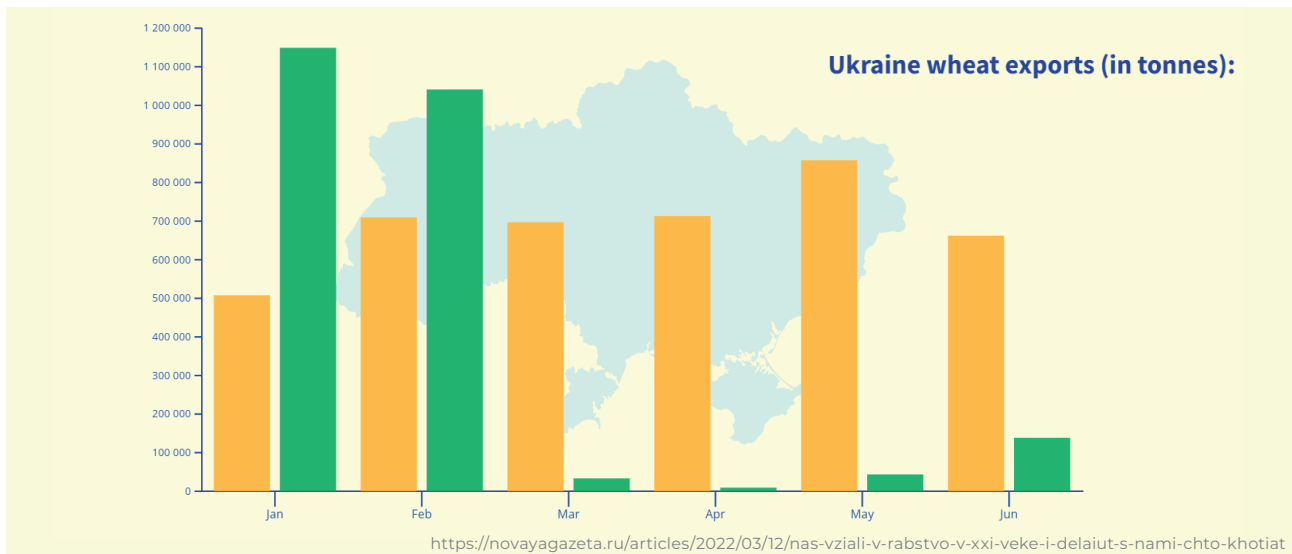


Russia's aggression against Ukraine raises the risk of biological, chemical, and nuclear weapon usage as it cannot withstand the broad coalition of states supporting Ukraine. This also undermines existing military transparency and disarmament initiatives²⁶¹. International institutions have already recorded Russia's use of chemical weapons against Ukrainians²⁶².

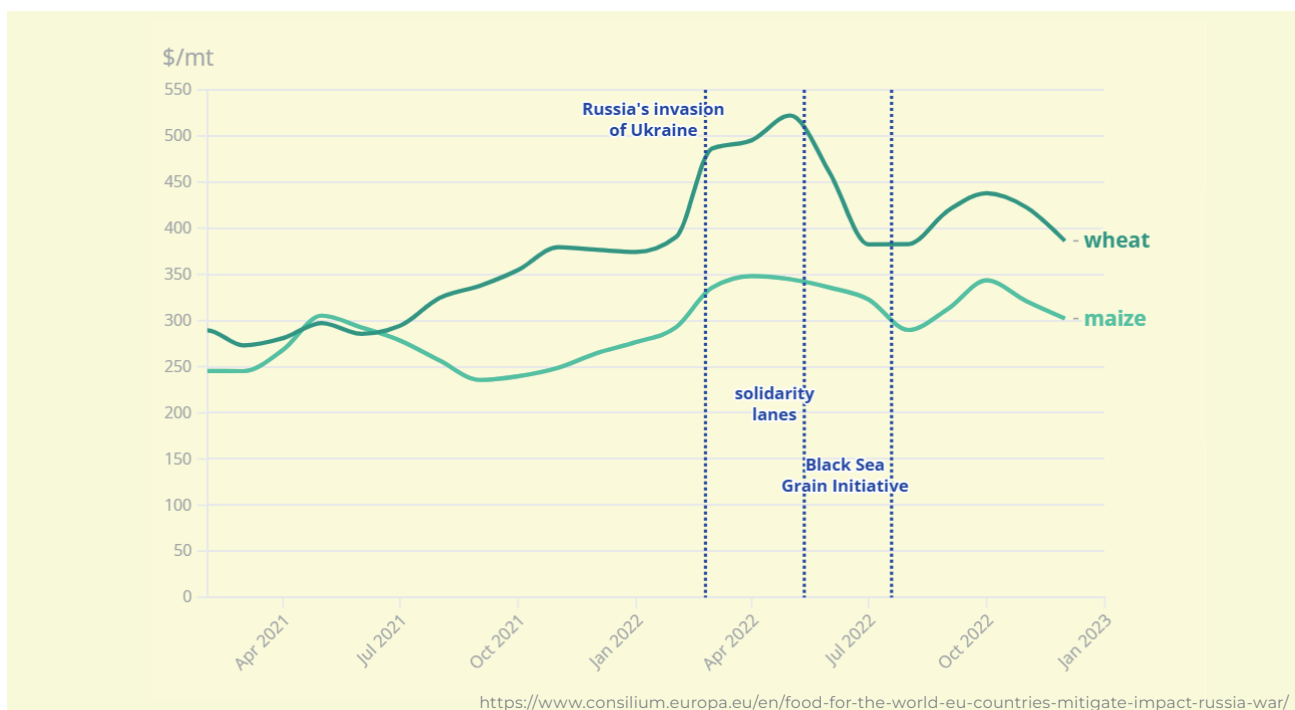
Moreover, Russia has purposefully heightened the risk of nuclear confrontation not only through direct nuclear weapon use but also by militarizing nuclear power plants in occupied territories and other states. This aims to weaken Ukraine's military and diplomatic support²⁶³ and influence foreign policy decisions of other countries.

The official policy of Russia is to fight against what it calls the "Collective West" in Ukraine. This narrative is supported by Russian propaganda²⁶⁴. General Patrick Sanders is concerned²⁶⁴ about the dangers of this hostile rhetoric to international security. He warns that we should not assume that the conflict in Ukraine is limited, and that Putin's actions may not always follow our logic. Russia is fighting at the strategic level, which means that it can lose battles and engagements but still ultimately prevail. Putin has recently declared his intention to restore the lands of "historic Russia," which makes any break in hostilities temporary, and the threat will become even greater. After the conflict in Ukraine, Russia may pose an even greater threat to European security than it did before²⁶⁵.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FOOD SECURITY AND THE ENERGY MARKET



The occupation and expansion of Ukraine's territories by Russia has caused world prices for food, fertilizers, and fuel to increase significantly. As of the beginning of 2022, Ukraine produces 50% of the world's sunflower oil, 1/5 of barley, 1/6 of corn, and 1/8 of wheat²⁶⁶. In 2021, Ukrainian grain was provided to 400 million people around the world²⁶⁷. However, during the first five months of the invasion, Russia prevented the export of Ukrainian food by sea through the Black Sea, which contributed to the increase in prices. This, in turn, can lead to an increase in the price of animal products, and prices will also increase for alternative supplies of food from other countries.



These trends have already led to more than 14 million people in Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya being on the brink of starvation, with approximately 50% of them being children. Without adequate measures, this number may increase to 20 million soon²⁶⁸. According to the head of the World Food Program, "Every 1% increase in hunger leads to a 2% increase in migration," especially from North Africa and the Middle East to Europe²⁶⁹. At the same time, Germany has the highest number of asylum applications among EU countries, according to EASO data²⁷⁰.

It is important to note that the food crisis will have a significant impact on the deterioration of the migration situation, particularly in Europe, and this will be more noticeable in 2023. This is due to a decrease in access to fertilizers that coincides with sowing seasons.

The European Council emphasized in its June 23, 2022 Conclusions that Russia is solely responsible for the global food crisis and urged Russia to immediately stop attacking agricultural facilities and not to hinder the export of Ukrainian grain²⁷¹. On August 1, 2022, the Black Sea Grain Initiative was launched, and Ukraine exported over 11 million tons of agricultural products to 38 countries worldwide. On October 29, 2022, Russia withdrew from the Initiative. However, after a firm position was taken on the extension of the agreement without Russia's participation, Russia announced its return to the Initiative on November 2, 2022. Russia attempted to use food blackmail, along with energy and nuclear, to negotiate concessions, particularly in the area of sanctions, but failed²⁷².

Russia's aggression against Ukraine caused the biggest shock in energy prices since the 1970s. The estimated share of GDP spent on final energy consumption has increased sharply from less than 9% in 2020 to over 16% in 2022²⁷³. The increase in energy prices was also the main reason for the rise in inflation. Consequently, the cost of living has increased by up to 25%, which poses a significant threat to low-income groups. In response to the urgent need to reduce dependence on Russia, states are making significant changes in their energy policies. However, reorientation in the energy market will only result in an increase in prices in the initial stages, while in the long term, it will have several positive consequences. For instance, interest in alternative energy sources has already been revived, which contributes to the realization of sustainable development goals. Germany, for example, plans to achieve 100% renewable energy by 2035²⁷⁴.

MIGRATION CRISIS

The aggression by Russia against Ukraine has caused the largest refugee crisis in Europe since World War II. Over 8.13 million people have left Ukraine to live abroad since the full-scale invasion began. Of these, 7.86 million are registered in European countries, including 2.85 million in Russia (until March 2022), 1.54 million in Poland, 1.02 million in Germany, 472 thousand in the Czech Republic, 173 thousand in Italy, and 159 thousand in Spain. More than 4.86 million people who fled Ukraine have temporary protection or a similar status in European countries²⁷⁵.

The annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine also caused over 2 million refugees and internally displaced persons between 2014 and 2021²⁷⁶. However, unlike the refugees who crossed the border after February 2022, Ukrainians received less attention before the full-scale invasion began. Some media outlets referred to them as "Europe's forgotten refugees" due to the lack of support and low success rate in granting asylum applications in the European Union²⁷⁷.

According to the International Organization for Migration, as of the end of March 2022, 13.5% of refugees had crossed the border in connection with Russian aggression in 2014-2015 but returned to Ukraine due to a lack of support from the European community²⁷⁸. As a result, many victims of the conflict have been traumatized multiple times due to forced repeated flight from hostilities.

The prolonged armed conflict is not benefiting Ukrainian refugees living abroad, and the situation is starting to resemble what existed from 2014 to 2021. Despite some countries improving the conditions for Ukrainians, such as Germany equating them with their citizens for unemployment benefits²⁷⁹, a study by The Washington Post shows that 17% of German respondents believe their country is doing too much for Ukrainian citizens fleeing the war. Meanwhile, 31% of respondents support increasing their number and current level of support²⁸⁰. Public opinion polls indicate that citizens of foreign countries are unwilling to maintain the current high level of support for the conflict's victims in the long term. This could lead to a repeat of the 2015 migration crisis in the EU when borders were closed, causing a humanitarian disaster in Ukraine.

The active migration caused by the armed conflict presents additional threats to protecting human rights. The Group of Experts of the Council of Europe Against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) and aid organizations, such as the Human Trafficking Foundation and World Vision, warn that refugees are at risk of becoming victims of human trafficking and exploitation, including sexual violence²⁸¹. Those fleeing the horrors of armed conflict may face discrimination based on ethnicity, race, and sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI). Some foreigners, Roma, and transgender people have reported discrimination at the border. Hate speech and discrimination in Western societies pose a threat to the rule of law, democracy, and respect for protecting human rights in the Euro-Atlantic region.



Russian aggression has also resulted in forced deportations of Ukrainians abroad. As of October 3, 2022, more than 4.5 million people, including 685,000 children, have been deported to Russian territory²⁸². Deportations of Ukrainians have the characteristics of a war crime and a crime against humanity. In addition, during the forced removal, other international crimes are committed, such as torture, arbitrary deprivation of liberty, enforced disappearances, intentional murders, and the forcible transfer of Ukrainian children to Russian families, which has the characteristics of a crime of genocide against the Ukrainian nation.

LEVELING THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL LAW IN THE REGULATION OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



Before Russia's aggression against Ukraine began, the development of international law was focused on finding the best way to balance legal obligations, political interests, economic benefits, and human rights. However, for many years, this search was done alongside a policy of appeasement towards the aggressor, which involved interpreting international law principles too flexibly. The full-scale invasion by Russia was the culmination of this trend and resulted in the devaluation of the international legal order and collective security system.

Despite the international community's condemnation of the invasion, their inability to prevent a new round of aggression and indecisiveness in arming Ukraine during the early months of the conflict, along with untimely and insufficiently harsh sanctions, have had a destructive impact on the international security system. When a state, which is a guarantor of nuclear deterrence under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), violates fundamental norms of international law, it can lead to the cultivation of violent approaches to the settlement of international disputes, and may even lead to a return to the law of force in international relations.

The Russian Federation's aggression towards Ukraine has brought into question the relevance of transcontinental and universal security regimes, such as the OSCE and UN. It has also highlighted the ineffectiveness of existing security mechanisms, particularly the UN Security Council which is often blocked by the right of veto. The aggression has exposed issues in the progressive development of international law, which was unprepared for challenges posed by violating fundamental norms. This has resulted in a legal vacuum, leaving issues like prosecution for international crimes, fair compensation, and the regulation of private military companies and advanced weaponry, among others, unresolved. These issues erode trust in international law.

Initiatives designed to contribute to the goals of sustainable development and fair trade, which were developed prior to the full-scale invasion, have been put on hold since February 24, 2022. Formalizing the end of the armed conflict in Ukraine, including prosecuting senior officials



responsible for international crimes, recovering compensation, and providing guarantees of non-repetition, will impact the future role of international law in regulating international relations. Failure to prosecute guilty officials will signal an escalation of conflicts in crisis regions worldwide and stimulate the development and proliferation of prohibited weapons. Insufficient security guarantees for Ukraine may also lead to repeated aggression against it in the future.

CONCLUSION

The European Parliament's statement is correct in acknowledging that Russia's aggression against Ukraine violates the UN Charter and poses a threat to global security and international law²⁸³. The armed conflict in Ukraine that began in 2014 and escalated in February 2022 has had a negative impact on global development in many areas, including security, law, economy, trade, and population movement. The conflict has impeded initiatives aimed at overcoming discrimination, hunger, poverty, and establishing democracy and human rights.

Russia's aggression has also slowed down the world economy, disrupted global supply chains, caused energy shocks, and led to inflation and impoverishment in both developing and developed countries. This has pushed millions of people from Africa, Asia, and Latin America to the brink of poverty and hunger, leading to a potential migration crisis that could surpass that of 2015.

Attempts to appease the aggressor through territorial concessions have been ineffective. The international community, which sought peace, was not prepared for war. The peace built on agreements in which Ukraine was treated as an object rather than an equal participant has resulted in a conflict on a scale comparable to World War II, with far-reaching consequences beyond the parties involved and the region. These consequences are evident in food, humanitarian, migration, economic, and energy crises, the devaluation of international law, the rise of international crime, and threats to international security.

IMF analysts have identified three ways in which the impact of Russian aggression against Ukraine will affect the world in the future:

- 1** Prices of goods such as food and energy will increase, leading to higher inflation and a decrease in people's income, which in turn will negatively affect demand.
- 2** Changes in international supply chains and remittances will cause a significant influx of refugees.
- 3** Investors will face increasing risks, which will negatively impact asset prices and capital outflows from developing countries²⁸⁴.

However, the international community can use the situation as an opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to the international legal order, which forbids the use and threat of force. By ensuring the implementation of the principle of responsibility, reforming international institutions for increased effectiveness and prompt response, and transitioning to ecological energy sources, we can build sustainable peace and security based on the principles of the rule of law, democracy, and respect for human rights. By uniting around these fundamental principles and eradicating the idea of aggressive behavior in the international arena, we can establish a solid foundation for a better future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which was initiated by the aggression of the Russian Federation, is having a significant impact on the global system and has the potential to escalate into a regional military confrontation. This conflict, combined with economic, energy, and trade crises, contributes to the growth of radical attitudes and poses a threat to international security and legal order. Despite this, the international community has failed to prevent Russian aggression, and the policy of appeasement has only fueled Russia's territorial ambitions and led to the annexation of sovereign states. The conflict, which involves numerous violations of international law, including international crimes, is the most significant since World War II. To prevent future acts of aggression and promote sustainable peacebuilding, foreign states should take action:

a) in the field of international security:

- 1 Support Ukraine's "Peace Formula" presented at the UN to achieve peace²⁸⁵.
- 2 Explore and implement alternative strategies to nuclear deterrence based on existing international treaties.
- 3 Review and strengthen existing collective security mechanisms to ensure they can be implemented effectively if needed.
- 4 Increase NATO's presence near Russia's border to deter potential aggression.
- 5 Improve critical infrastructure to protect against cyberattacks from Russia.
- 6 Enforce and extend the arms embargo on Russia to prevent them from obtaining weapon components.
- 7 Help Ukraine build their capacity to resist any direct or hybrid interventions from Russia.

b) in the field of international law and ensuring justice:

- 1 Conduct proper investigations and implement universal jurisdiction for international crimes committed in Ukraine.
- 2 Preserve evidence and ensure the right to truth through independent commissions and monitoring missions.
- 3 Participate in creating and operating the Special Tribunal on aggression against Ukraine.
- 4 Cooperate with the ICC to bring international criminals to justice for crimes committed in Ukraine.
- 5 Enforce international judicial decisions against the Russian Federation for aggression against Ukraine.
- 6 Help Ukraine receive reparations for damages caused by the Russian Federation.
- 7 Ensure fair compensation for victims of international crimes committed in Ukraine.
- 8 Reform international institutions to prevent the Russian Federation from hindering their activities.
- 9 Ensure companies and citizens comply with sanctions against the Russian Federation.

c) in the field of economic cooperation:

- 1** Make sure sanctions against Russia are properly enforced until Ukraine's territorial integrity is restored and it receives compensation for damages caused.
- 2** Reduce reliance on Russian imports, and increase food supplies to developing countries from other sources.
- 3** Help Ukraine integrate with Europe by cooperating on energy, humanitarian, military, and infrastructure initiatives to counter Russia's destabilizing actions

d) in the humanitarian sphere:

- 1** Combat Russian propaganda in the media by sharing accurate information on the international crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine
- 2** Help Ukrainian citizens return home once it is safe to do so.

ENDNOTES AND REFERENCES

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